

How Swindlers Use the Mails

BY FREDERIC J. HASKIN.

It is a very old theory that the public likes to be humbugged. Confidence games began in America when the first traders gave a handful of glass beads to the Indians in exchange for valuable furs. The Indians seem to have liked it. The swindlers' methods of sending information about his schemes from place to place by word of mouth, or by a demonstrator, soon grew too slow for the American confidence man, and long before the '70's he was working the mails for all they were worth in pushing his ideas. There was no law against it, because such a contingency had not been foreseen, and soon there appeared in papers and in circulars sent through the mails most astounding offers by which the ambitious might amass a fortune by the expenditure of only a few cents.

Lotteries made use of the mails for sending out the circulars and for gathering in the cash that spendthrift souls sent their way. Wonderful offers to heal far-away patients by means of magnetism, hypnotism, mind control, or by simple medicinal ingredients unknown to the crowd of the mail bags and called for an increase in the post-office forces. Astrologers and phenologists solicited patronage in printed letters that were rich in mystical lore and overflowing with queer rhetorical combinations. Bond investments, mines, bank schemes, turf enterprises, mines, great tropical plantations, and dozens of get-rich-quick schemes found voice in circulars, cards, and letters. The unsophisticated country woman was told, in a surprisingly friendly letter, how she could find a most remunerative life at home by doing sewing or embroidering, or soliciting, and her equally unsophisticated husband became initiated in blind pool schemes for speculating in stocks.

Then the government awoke to the realization that the people were being swindled; that its own postal service was the quickest means of doing the swindling, and that it was being used for all it was worth. In 1872 swindling by mail had grown so noticeable that the attention of Congress was drawn to it, and a law was enacted making it punishable by fine to mail through any post-office letter or circulars containing "illegal lotteries" or schemes devised to deceive and defraud the public. In 1876 the term "illegal" was stricken from the law, and all lotteries came under the ban. An older law, dating back to 1868, had also prohibited the sending of lottery stuff by mail, but the makers of the bill had overlooked the attaching of any kind of penalty to it, so it was necessarily of little use.

In 1890 the law was made to apply not only to lotteries as they are generally known, but to all "so-called" gift concerns and similar enterprises offering prizes dependent upon lot or chance. Year by year the law has tightened its grip on the mails, and any scheme that savors of fraud is brought promptly under the notice of the post-office authorities and sifted down to the bottom. All offers of work, or of commodities, or of prizes for guessing contests are given the respectful and careful attention of the postal authorities, and if there is any suspicious air about it the promoter of the scheme is promptly brought before the bar of justice and given an opportunity to prove the truth of his offers. From the passage of the act of 1890 to the end of the last fiscal year, 2,600 "fraud orders" were issued by the Post-office Department, and if the persons against whom they were issued did not comply at once with the law, suits, fines, and other unpleasant things followed.

The average swindler who uses the mails is a wily fellow. He has learned the art of wording his offers so they attract the remote and indifferently educated, and so plausible do his statements sound that he finds easy and ready victims. One is frankly amazed at the credulity of the human race. A typewriter company of New York induced persons to send \$250 as a guarantee of good faith in a "copying at home" scheme, in which the purchaser was to have a typewriter and 500 sheets of paper and copy letters at \$2.50 a thousand. The typewriter proved to be a toy affair that was useless for the work. The purchaser is out about \$2, and the firm in that much.

One clever New York firm bought up a lot of letters from an agency to get addresses, then wrote each person that he or she had won a prize, which would be sent by express to him or her, and to "cover cost of boxing and packing charges." Each delighted person invariably sent the amount, and received a piece of cheap jewelry worth a few cents. A blueing company offered a "new automatic tension sewing machine" to persons selling thirty packages of wash blue at 10 cents apiece. The machine proved to be a toy affair, and the letter in answer to a woman's threat to sue is filed away as a mark of genuine cleverness on the part of the artful dodger who originated the scheme. Eager detective agencies were thick in the land for a while. For a certain sum of money they would send a star, certificate of membership, credentials, etc., to the purchaser, and not until the astonished victim had been had up before unfeeling magistrates for carrying a weapon, or for impersonating an officer, did the luckless fellow realize that he had been the victim of a scoundrel.

The South was wrought up considerably a few years since over the operations of "The National Industry Council," which extorted money from the negroes under the pretense of helping them get pension money. By request of the organization a bill was introduced into Congress providing pensions for ex-slaves. This was used as a means of swindling the trusting negro out of his hard earnings. It was declared that \$100,000,000 was to be sent at once into the Southern States, and under one pretext or another money was obtained from those who were expecting a share of the pension. This and several like organizations were suppressed by fraud orders. Another set of enterprising folks who found the negro an easy prey followed on the heels of these. A Chillicothe, Ohio, firm advertised a fund that would turn the blackest skins white, and others offered liquids that would make kinky hair straight. Many of these were injurious preparations, and fraud orders have put most of the firms out of business.

A Dallas firm found a ready market for "mineral rods," which were supposed to discover gold and silver below the surface of the earth. In order to stimulate interest in the firm offered to buy up all old coins that might be revealed by this magic. Other schemes of this kind have had surprising success in the South, but, they too, have been suppressed by the government. Nevada and Missouri sprung a wonderful school of magnetic healing on the public. The president of the institution guaranteed to devote a certain time each day to "absent treatment" of his patients for the sum of \$5 a month, payable in advance. No body appears to have been healed, because the president was busy dictating letters to other trusting souls at the time

he should have had his mind on his pre-paid patients. It is a pity he came under the government's displeasure, for he guaranteed to cure poverty, and to give success in business at the rate of \$1 a month per patient.

A Florida woman got into the same trouble by promising to devote fifteen minutes a day to each patient, when thoughts from her soul would enter theirs and renew them to better and higher life. She was a little cleverer than the Missouri man, having in some way given the government sufficient absent treatment to successfully evade the penalty of the law, though it has been on her heels for several years. "Physicians" with marvelous new remedies are thick in the land, and there is little that they find themselves unable to cure, to judge from their optimistic circulars. They raise the dead in their literature as expeditiously as they raise money from the pockets of the living in reality. Mining enterprises draw victims like a honey-pot draws ants, and the man at Baker City, Oreg., who sold stock in the White

To-morrow—Personal Stories.

PUPILS' CARNIVAL ENDS.

Prizes Distributed for Miss Shreve's Students.

With the distribution of the prizes, the carnival held during the past week at the National Theater, by the pupils of Miss Cora B. Shreve, ended last night. Miss Alma Nelson, the twelve-year-old dancer, was awarded the first prize, \$5 in gold. Miss Leona Callan got the second prize for toe dancing, and the third was



Miss Madolin Smithson.

won by the Misses Maria and Felma Servicer. Miss Mamie Schuyler and Miss Neta Perkins received fourth prize, and the fifth and sixth went to Miss Blanche Smith and Miss Gladys Barrow respectively, while Master Fred Berens and Miss Adrienne Shreve got the seventh.

All the prizes, except the first, were medals, suitably inscribed. There were also several prizes for advancement and class work, so that most of the children received a medal of some kind or other. One of the most promising pupils, Miss Margaret Poole, was unable to perform owing to a recent death in her family, and a special medal was provided for her hard work in class.

AIDS AT ELKS' JUBILEE.

Committee of Ladies Named Who Will Preside at the Booths.

Plans for the Elks' rural jubilee and bazaar dance, which is to be given at Benning's June 6 and 7, are progressing satisfactorily, and those in charge say that everything indicates that a considerable sum will be added to the fund for furnishing the order's new home, now being built. The committee on the country store has been active during the past week or more and reports that donations are coming in rapidly. New features are being added, among these being a country post-office and a German village, in which national beverages and eatables will be dispensed.

An efficient ladies' committee has been organized to assist at all the booths and attractions at the jubilee, viz.: Mrs. Ida J. Maxwell, chairman; Mrs. M. A. McCombs, vice chairman; Mrs. R. E. Matthews, treasurer; Mrs. C. A. Mason, secretary; Mrs. J. F. Gerhold, Mrs. F. A. Malby, Mrs. Frank P. Hall, Mrs. J. C. Watson, Mrs. William W. Wheeler, Mrs. J. B. Caldwell, Mrs. Stella Tolson, Mr. G. Van Fleet, Mrs. W. A. Hettiger, Mrs. John Pender, Mrs. D. E. Sumner, Mrs. T. J. McQuade, Mrs. T. B. McKellar, Mrs. J. Prescott McKellar, Mrs. R. M. Ireland, Mrs. Norman Pruitt, Mrs. Charles H. Urmahine, Mrs. M. E. Swig, Mrs. John McGill, Mrs. James McKenna, Mrs. Sol Morris, Mrs. J. William Lee, and Misses M. E. Mendenhall, Lena Hettiger, Jennette S. King, Carrie C. Watson, Carrie Dismar, Mary C. Pitts, Anna E. Gerhold, Sadie T. Rosenburg, Millie Morris, Horace Morris, Nellie Lee, Mamie T. Dunn, and Maggie M. Dunn.

From this committee Mrs. Hettiger has been appointed chairman of the committee to assist at the German village, Mrs. Malby at the post-office, Van Fleet heads the committee in charge of the Japanese pool tables, and Miss Mamie Dunn is chairman of the committee assisting at the country store.

The ladies' committee is to meet again Friday night at Elks' Hall, E. street, between Tenth and Eleventh, and has also been asked to meet the executive committee at its regular meeting next Monday night. Chairman John C. Maxwell, of the executive committee, has announced the selection of Joseph A. Burkart as a member of that committee. Mr. Burkart is the general counsel of the board in charge of the jubilee.

COLLINS STANDS PAT

Insists on His Right to Stop Diplomatic Autos.

GERMANY NOT OFFENDED

Glen Echo Marshal Says He Freed Herr von Radowitz Upon Presentation of Card—Mayor Garrett Wants State Department to Act—Embassy Secretary Is Now Out of Town.

Diplomatic relations between Germany and the United States have not been strained as yet through the action of the valiant Marshal Collins, of Glen Echo, in halting the automobile of Herr W. von Radowitz, Monday afternoon, with a couple of shots from his revolver. The second secretary of the German Embassy has made no complaint to the State Department, and, according to Assistant Secretary Robert W. Bacon, no action will be taken by the department unless request is made. Herr von Radowitz was out of the city yesterday and nothing could be learned at the embassy, where strict reticence upon the Glen Echo incident was observed.

The affair is taken lightly by the German representatives and officials of the State Department. Acting Secretary Bacon said yesterday that the incident had no diplomatic importance, inasmuch as no formal complaint had been made or expected. The German secretary told Mr. Bacon about it at a dinner Tuesday night, but spoke of it in purely a jocular vein. It appeared that Herr von Radowitz bore no animus toward the Glen Echo marshal, and had no criticism to make except in regard to Collins' use of his revolver.

Incident Not Important. It was learned yesterday that the incident appeared unimportant at the State Department because of the fact that the German secretary had not been arrested, but, on the contrary, had been allowed to proceed upon the presentation of his card to the Glen Echo marshal, in accordance with international law and etiquette. The custom is that diplomats are subject to the action of State and municipal authorities only as long as their identity is unknown to the officers.

Owing to the absence of Herr von Radowitz and the reticence of his associates and superiors, his side of the story of the arrest is yet to be learned. According to Marshal Collins, the German secretary's behavior Monday afternoon was calculated to make any well-regulated automobile chasser peevish. The sturdy upholder of the majesty of Glen Echo statutes complains that not only was he given a merry spin at top speed from Cabin John to the eastern limit of Glen Echo, but that the chase was rendered more galling by Herr von Radowitz, who stood up in his seat in the machine and shouted strange Teutonic things at the pursuing officer.

Between weird and fearsome sentences of unpolished German construction, Collins said he could distinguish orders to the American chauffeur to increase the speed and not stop on any account. The marshal, nearly winded, belittled forth his commands to halt again and again, but was rewarded by an increased volume of burnt gasoline smoke and louder ejaculations from the provoking Herr von Radowitz.

It was then, says the marshal, that he drew his revolver and fired two shots into the ground beside him. This had the desired effect upon the chauffeur, who brought the machine to a halt, despite the commands of the secretary to proceed. Collins says that when he went up to the machine, Herr von Radowitz continued to rattle away at him in German, refusing, in broken English phrases, to submit to arrest. The marshal drew his handcuffs and was about to put them on the wrists of his unruly prisoner

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